

## GAGOSIAN GALLERY

11 August 2011

PRESS RELEASE

**GAGOSIAN GALLERY**

6-24 BRITANNIA STREET

LONDON WC1X 9JD

GALLERY HOURS:

T. 020.7841.9960

F. 020.7841.9961

Tue – Sat: 10:00am– 6:00pm



### **MIKE KELLEY: *Exploded Fortress of Solitude***

Thursday, 8 September – Saturday, 22 October 2011

Opening reception for the artist: Thursday, September 8th, from 6 to 8 pm

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present sculptures and a large-scale installation by Mike Kelley.

The *Kandors* series, which Kelley initiated in 1999, are sculptural depictions of Superman's birthplace Kandor. The popular Superman story recounts the adventures of an alien being sent to Earth as a baby to escape the total destruction of his home planet Krypton. However, it turns out that Kandor was not, in fact, destroyed. Shrunk and bottled by a villain, the futuristic city was later rescued by Superman and protected under a bell jar in his sanctuary, the Fortress of Solitude. For almost a quarter-century in comic-book time, Kandor and its miniature citizens survived in Superman's care, sustained by tanks of atmosphere, a constant reminder of his lost past and a metaphor for his psychic disconnection from his adopted planet.

In examining the extensive archive that was amassed of Kandor's depiction in Superman comics, Kelley was struck by the inconsistent nature of its ongoing representation. Choosing twenty diverse examples from the myriad two-dimensional renderings of the sci-fi city, Kelley has created three-dimensional Kandors and variant works. In these he explores the formal properties of reflectivity and translucency by casting the Kandors in colored resins, setting them in tinted glass bottles, and illuminating them like reliquaries in specifically designed settings.

In the current exhibition, Kelley has shifted his formal investigations to monumental sculptural problems, depicting Superman's Fortress of Solitude as a sort of bunker in ruins. The centerpiece *Kandor 10B (Exploded Fortress of Solitude)* is a pile of dark boulders and slabs forming a cave with a quarry-like foyer made from *faux* black rock and built on a scale that invites the viewer into the forbidden fortress. Set within the cave's inner recesses is a glowing rose-colored city-in-a-bottle. The same black rock forms organic plinths that support Kandor city sculptures, as well as a series of "satellite" elements that surround and echo *Kandor 10B's* broken ramparts. The satellites are paired with sculpted metallic body parts recalling fragments of classical sculpture, and other materials, evoking public war memorials and related edifices.

(Continue to page 2)

The exhibition also includes two videotapes. *Vice Anglais* focuses on a group of a sadistic perverts who reside in the cave-like *Kandor 10B*; it is reminiscent of the gothic "Hammer Horror" films produced in the U.K. from the 1950s to the 1970s. *Made in England* presents the script for *Vice Anglais*, spoken by voice-over actors and "performed" by a still-life arrangement of British decorative objects, like a puppet show in which these "export objects" return home to the place of their origin. Both tapes are humorous responses to Robert M. Cooper's *Lost on Both Sides, Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Critic and Poet*, a critical analysis of the flamboyant English painter's writings.

A fully illustrated catalogue documenting the Los Angeles and London exhibitions is forthcoming, with an essay by Jeffrey Sconce, Associate Professor in the Department of Radio, Television, and Film at Northwestern University and author of *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (2000).

**Mike Kelley** was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1954. He lives and works in Los Angeles. He studied at the California Institute of the Arts and the University of Michigan. Recent major exhibitions include "Mike Kelley: Educational Complex Onwards: 1995-2008," WIELS Centre d'Art Contemporain (2008); "Mike Kelley: Profondeurs Vertes," Musée du Louvre (2006); and "Mike Kelley: The Uncanny," Tate Liverpool and Museum Moderne Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna (2004).

For further information please contact Tessa Goodhew at [tessa@gagosian.com](mailto:tessa@gagosian.com) or at +44.207.841.9960.